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JAMES C. NELSON

M. E. PECK

(With portrait)

The subject of this sketch was born in Grant County, Kentucky, December 11, 1867. He received his B. S. degree from Hanover College, Indiana, in 1890, and three years later his master's degree.

He had prepared himself for the teaching profession and spent the remainder of his life in this field. He taught first in Carthage College, Missouri, then in Hull Academy, Iowa, and later at Princeton, Illinois, Dubuque, Iowa, and Marshalltown, Iowa, as high school principal. From the last named place he went to Wenatchee, Washington, and two years later, 1914, to Salem, Oregon, where he spent the rest of his life, as principal of the high school until 1929, when the load of responsibility became too great and he was obliged to retire. He then took the position of registrar, which he held to the time of his death, January 29, 1944. He was married to Anna Van Horssen, of Orange City, Iowa, in 1904.

Mr. Nelson was a man of broad intellectual attainments and a tireless student to the end of his life. He mastered languages with facility, was an accomplished Latin and Greek scholar, read extensively in German, Dutch, French and Portuguese, and was a careful student of French history of the revolutionary period, gathering for his private library a large collection of French histories of the time. Later he became deeply interested in the literature of the South American republics and carried on an extensive correspondence with many of the eminent writers of

those countries, and accumulated a choice collection particularly of Brazilian works.

With all his intense intellectual activity Mr. Nelson never lost personal touch with the hundreds of young people who were under his supervision. His influence over them was wholesome and profound, and he was respected and loved accordingly. His work with the Salem High School was remarkable. From a very mediocre institution he raised it, largely by his own personal influence, into one of the best schools of its kind in the state.

His botanical work, while pursued with his characteristic enthusiasm, did not constitute a major part of his activity, though he had a keen taxonomic sense. All his published papers and notes on the subject, with one or two exceptions, fall within a period of seven years, 1916-1923. This represents but a small part of his work, however. He once told me with regret of the poor start he had in taxonomy. His teacher in Botany took no interest in his aspirations in this field, and was even annoyed by his propensity for collecting and identifying plants. He persisted, however, and finally became particularly interested in grasses and sedges, accumulating a considerable collection, which he deposited in the herbarium of Willamette University. His later interests were largely concerned with the introduction of foreign plants in Oregon. The number of these exotics is very large, and the part they play in the make-up of the flora of the state is immensely important. In this field his contributions have great value, both in published records and in specimens collected, nearly all of which have been deposited in large herbaria, especially the Gray Herbarium and the National Herbarium.

It is to be deeply regretted that Mr. Nelson's botanical work could not have been continued to the end of his life. A defective heart action made it necessary to discontinue the strenuous field trips that gave zest to his work, and having no large collection or library at hand, there was little he could do to advantage. With that cheerful philosophy that characterized his whole attitude toward life, he took up those intellectual pursuits which ripened, though late in life, into a broad rich scholarship, such as we seldom find in these days.

James C. Nelson was somewhat below medium height, with clear-cut, rather rugged features, quick and energetic in his

movements. He had a deep, resonant voice, with a great range of expression. He possessed a keen sense of humor and a remarkable command of language. He was capable of deep emotions and when strongly moved was a superb public speaker. I have a vivid memory of an April morning a few days after this country entered the first World War, when the call had just come for volunteers. Mr. Nelson had been asked to address the student body of Willamette University at their morning assembly. That address, which I believe was wholly extemporaneous, was the most moving, the most eloquent example of spontaneous oratory I have ever heard. Its effect on his hearers may be judged by the fact that more than a third of the young men of the student body went from the chapel straight to headquarters and enlisted.

He carried on a varied and voluminous correspondence with scientists and scholars in many parts of this country as well as in Europe and South America. His letters have a fine characteristic flavor, whether philosophical, humorous, satirical or merely circumstantial. They represent the man as we knew him best, a superior intellect, an accomplished scholar, with broad, sympathetic human interests.

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LINUM CATHARTICUM IN NEW BRUNSWICK.—There is always a certain interest in tracing the spread of an introduced species; from this point of view, it may be worth while to record the occurrence of *Linum catharticum* L. in New Brunswick. My wife and I found it in considerable quantity in a neglected athletic field at St. Andrew's in July, 1944. We were without collecting apparatus and could take no more specimens than could be carried in an envelope in my pocket; but enough to serve as vouchers for the locality have been deposited in the Gray Herbarium and the New Brunswick Museum.

L. catharticum is native in Newfoundland,¹ has been reported as adventive in eastern Nova Scotia, the central Maine coast and northern Vermont, and is said to be a bad weed at Farnham in southern Quebec—though it is hard to imagine so pretty and fragile-looking a little plant becoming really a nuisance. The St. Andrew's station is, then, not an extension of range, but it is apparently the first record for New Brunswick.—C. A. WEATHERBY.

¹ See *RHODORA*, xxxv. 15 (1933).